

Honorable members of the City Council, Mr. Rowlands, Mrs. Moore, Ms. Bigelow, Reverend Freeman, our friends from around the region and most importantly – fellow citizens of Chula Vista.

It is an honor and privilege to join you here in Memorial Park to speak of this city we love, of its rich history and traditions, its dreams and its challenges, and of our collective work these past eighteen months toward making our dreams reality and turning challenges into opportunities.

We are gathered here in a place dedicated to the memory of our many friends and neighbors who gave their lives in service to this community and country in times of need. Indeed, the greatest testament to community spirit after all, is the willingness to put oneself in harms way in order to secure and protect the very idea of community, the safety security and freedom, which keep it alive.

At this very moment, many of our friends and neighbors are doing so again and again in far away lands. Also at this very moment, and as is fitting in a free society, there are many differing voices and points of view on the matter of how best to safeguard our safety and security. But here in our local

community, regardless of our many and differing points of view on these and many issues of the day both great and small, we should not forget that this diversity only exists because of that freedom, which their sacrifice provides. We must always give support to the men and women who are taking great risks without the benefit of debate, just there because of the love of their communities and their devotion to duty.

Many times, it falls to the cities, villages and townships across our country to bear the most direct responsibility to give support and comfort to our military men and women, our veterans and their families, on an everyday and very personal level. It often falls to us, to truly say “Thank You.”

It is fitting I think, to reflect on our future in a place dedicated to those who secured it for us.

There is also another important significance to conducting this event at this place in our city. I chose this location here among our established neighborhoods, which have not seen this annual event held here among them in many years, because of what it has represented to us in the past, and because of what it represents for our future.

Not far from here is the small commercial center which along with early homesteads sprouted in the dawn of the 20th century to support an emerging agricultural community which interestingly enough would be nicknamed by some “The Lemon Capital of the World.” The rolling hills and bayside tidelands which were traversed by Father Serra on his way to help shape our region’s history would later be known as “El Rancho del Rey” or “The King’s Ranch”, a playground for our regions wealthy landowners and entrepreneurs.

Today, we are a very different Chula Vista, in transition from a suburban community to a large more metropolitan city, with its own unique character. Today our city is defined by our established neighborhoods west of the I-805, our historic downtown district here along 3rd Avenue, our bay front with its tremendous opportunities and our large nationally recognized planned communities stretching our boundaries to the east.

We are home to regionally and nationally recognized venues and points of interest. Coors Amphitheatre is noted and repeatedly awarded by the music industry as one of the top outdoor venues in all of North America. Each year it plays host to some of the top names in music entertainment, and

performers and musicians from a variety of musical styles from around the world. The U.S. Olympic Training Center, Chula Vista, one of only three, joins Colorado Springs, Colorado and Lake Placid New York as a special place where our athletic heroes train to make our nation proud. Knott's Soak City U.S.A. and the Chula Vista Nature Center draw thousands each year for recreation and education.

We take note of some very significant recent milestones. In January 2003 our city passed the 200,000-population mark, our current estimated population this month exceeds 214,000 Chula Vistans. Out of 478 cities throughout our nations largest state, we now rank as the 14th largest in all of California.

As we face the future, this historic downtown area can and must play a pivotal role. With the right investment and planning, because let there be no doubt the interest and will is already here, this area can become the focal point for our emerging city's identity, the true civic heart of our community. These downtown neighborhoods can be the place where we celebrate our heritage, the arts and culture, and draw Chula Vistans old and new, from east and west along with visitors from throughout San Diego county and the bi-

national region. For these reasons and more, here is where we should come together tonight.

If you examine successful and vibrant communities, there will always I think be found some common characteristics; a strong legacy of sound planning and clear vision, and strong commitment, dedication and involvement of their citizens. You will find also a point in which they recognized their key moment of opportunity, and boldly seized it. By this I mean that time when critical decisions must be made, in the right time and in the right manner in order to bring about results that make or break a city's vibrancy, identity and future. It is that critical moment or "time" if you will that if missed, may pass and may not be recaptured.

How does a community know when its moment is upon it? When opportunities with far reaching long term impacts, which can change the very nature of a community for generations to come present themselves and converge at a similar point in time, in an environment of positive accomplishments and community will, it is then we know a special but fleeting moment exists where present are ingredients necessary to turn these opportunities into triumphs.

My friends, the state of our city is solid and strong. We are prospering in a time of regional and statewide difficulty. In the last eighteen months we achieved significant accomplishments marking steps on the path to creating that vibrant city of tomorrow. We are not just contemplating, but planning and taking real steps toward creating a bay front which will open itself to our citizens and people from throughout the region for their enjoyment, supported by a broad consensus of our community. Renewed life, spirit and amenities in the core of our historic downtown are truly on the horizon and we have attracted regional and statewide interest both public and private for at long last bringing a quality institution of higher learning to Chula Vista.

Ladies and Gentlemen, our critical moment of history is upon us, and we must seize it. **This time is truly our time.**

Against a backdrop of severe economic challenges, an unprecedented statewide financial crisis, Chula Vista is standing out and thriving. Our crime rate continues impressive declines, placing us among the safest communities in our region. We are benefiting from sustained and steady economic growth with opportunities for housing, rising incomes and property values, diversification of our revenue base with additional

commercial and industrial investment by key industries such as electronics and pharmaceutical research.

Each month, Chula Vista receives growing attention from investors and industries from around the region and beyond due to a growing reputation as a progressive, emerging city. We are among the first stops for families seeking to become part of many of our renowned master planned communities. We have begun to take a more prominent role in regional affairs, being sure we contribute our share to our regions challenges and reap our share of its opportunities.

Our financial house is in order. Prudent investments, and strong management by our Executive and financial teams, have our budgets balanced with healthy surpluses. While many cities around our state are struggling, Chula Vista can and will absorb rising retirement costs, shifts in tax allocations and removal of revenues by the state. Indeed, across the board we are adding personnel, enhancing programs and providing critical equipment in support of a broad range of city services from public safety to parks and open space to library services and literacy programs.

We have made wholesale change in the manner in which we do business, enhancing community involvement and information in ways unprecedented. As we update the city's General Plan to map out how our community should look in coming decades, as we work with the Unified Port District toward finally achieving a bay front we can all support and enjoy, we have conducted hundreds of hours of workshops and conducted citizen advisory groups. Whether dealing with the general plan, the future of our historic downtown, the bay front, the pace of our city's growth or collaboration with our local school districts, we have made good strides in remembering to bring city hall to the people, instead of waiting for them to come to city hall.

In the always-important area of job growth, we saw three important achievements in the last eighteen months with the establishment of North American corporate headquarters for Profil Research and Hitachi North America, as well as successful collaboration with our largest private employer Goodrich Aerostructures to secure contracts with Boeing for their next generation of airliners, the 7E7.

Profil research began in Deuselndorf Germany working from an academic origin doing clinical research for pharmaceuticals. When they went looking

to locate in North America, our community went to work. Working with our local and regional business community and our capable community development staff, we were able to emphasize the advantages for their work program locating here and provide incentives. Today Profil research is headquartered here in Center Medical Plaza on Third Avenue, conducting trials for the some of the worlds largest pharmaceutical companies on treatments for diabetes. They are already requesting additional space, growing and planning for the expansion of their workforce.

This past year saw the opening of Hitachi North American headquarters here in Chula Vista along with a sizeable workforce to support their development, administrative and marketing functions.

Then one of our oldest and largest private employers, Goodrich Aerostructures set about securing their future and asked our city and region to help. Working against stiff competition around the nation and Europe, under conditions where our state was very limited in their ability to provide financial help, we did our best here on the local level. We were able to put some \$15 million dollars in total value incentive proposals forward to do our small part in helping Goodrich compete in the area of costs. Although our

help was only a drop in the bucket, due to their superior performance, our hometown company was able to outbid even Boeings internal division doing the same aircraft component work, and secure contracts for many years to come. This success means we can maintain and perhaps even grow high paying manufacturing and high wage engineering jobs here in Chula Vista to our benefit and that of the whole region.

Many of you may not know, but Goodrich Aerostructures, headquartered here in Chula Vista is the largest and most profitable division of the Goodrich Corporation worldwide. I want to take a moment to thank Goodrich Aerostructures very capable leader, its President and CEO Mr. Curtis Reusser. Curt is in Japan currently and I want to thank him for the working relationship we have developed and thank Goodrich for its corporate citizenship.

In the areas of infrastructure, public services and public safety we haven't been sitting still either. In 2003 alone we poured over 25 million dollars into infrastructure improvements in facilities, road and sidewalk improvements and park space. Our traffic enhancement and monitoring system assures a stabilizing in the rate of new growth for areas which impact traffic corridors

until SR-125 is completed. We celebrated the long awaited ground breaking of this critical piece of our local and regional transportation system, a major milestone for the future of South County as a whole. On that important matter I would like to take a moment to thank two citizen leaders who worked tirelessly to build public support for that project. Let's show our appreciation to Planning Commissioner Dan Hom and Mr. Bob McAlister.

We pooled and focused Capital Improvement Program funds to leverage the participation of nearly the entire neighborhood of Castle Park, so they will finally see the streets and sidewalks they were promised long ago. We have doubled our staffing for code enforcement activities throughout our city and in areas in particular need.

This past year saw the re-activation of our Youth Commission bringing renewed interest and participation from the leaders of tomorrow, identifying issues and offering solutions. We will see this year the expansion of the very successful STRETCH and DASH programs, which provide our primary school age children with needed skill enrichment, special guidance and structured positive and unique programs in after school hours at school sites. We are proud that although a great collaboration with the school district,

these popular programs are 100% city funded, structured and administered and will now cover every elementary school in Chula Vista. We saw the approval of the Greenbelt master plan to complete the envisioned green belt surrounding our city, from our northern boundaries to upper and lower Otay, through the Otay Valley to and including our bay front. We adopted four master plans for four new large community parks to be completed in 2005 and 2006. These parks will bring an additional 82 acres of park and recreation space to our already existing 400 acres of parkland. This does not include, of course, the over 10,243 acres of open space within our borders.

Our nature center opened the David Wergland Shark & Ray Exhibit and Eagle Mesa, featuring the national eagles of the United States and Mexico, symbolic of our regions history, and a reminder that our futures are woven together here in this region.

We have produced financing and design plans to bring the fourth branch of our library system to Rancho Del Rey, while our existing three branches saw over 1 million visitors, provided over 800 community programs serving 42,000 participants.

I am particularly proud of the investments and efforts we have made to support our public safety personnel and provide them the necessary equipment, personnel and training to meet the increasing needs of our community. We celebrated the opening of our new Battalion station, Fire station 7 in Otay Ranch on Sept. 11, 2003 dedicated to the brave fire service members who died on Sept. 11, 2001 in New York. We are investing in significant improvements to two other existing stations, construction of station 6 is underway and we anticipate opening an eighth station in July of next year near the Eastlake Woods. We have expanded our reserve fleet of fire apparatus, added a light air rescue rig, consolidated our communications function here in Chula Vista for police and fire, and added over 34 personnel to our fire department.

Last month, we celebrated the opening of our city's state of the art police facility, one that will meet the needs of our law enforcement men and women as well as our community for many years to come. Its features are state of the art and its design one of which we can be proud. You should know that our department, working with Highland Partnership achieved the completion of this major facility on time and on budget.

Speaking of our fire and police personnel and their accomplishments, I want to take a moment, share a reflection with you and once again give some special thanks to them and all of our city staff. As you all know, this past October our region suffered the worst fire disaster in its history. It was tragic and could have been much worse for us here in Chula Vista. Early one late October morning, I received a telephone call I never expected I would receive in my tenure as Mayor. I was told massive fires were possibly converging and moving in new directions, one of which was toward our city's eastern borders. Emergency evacuations of large residential communities were immanent.

I presided over a declaration of a state of emergency by our City Council and saw the activation of our Emergency Operation Center for the first time in city history. Over the next 48 hrs I was briefed by our fire and police professionals and told that if certain weather conditions persisted, fire would reach Chula Vista, proceed west with plenty of fuel, and burn from the borders of lower Otay Lakes all the way to the bay. Under the circumstances facing the whole county, there would be no way to stop it or save structures, we could only hope to save lives.

With the help I am sure of divine providence and little bit of luck, conditions changed and we were spared. But the actions throughout these days of our public safety personnel as well as staff from all departments were amazing to watch. No emergency situation is ever tidy or entirely orderly, but I will never forget their professionalism during that time, nor could a Mayor in a community ever been more proud. Let's thank our police and fire professionals all our city staff for their conduct during that difficult time.

Seizing our critical moment means identifying the challenges we must meet together in the months ahead. Success on our bay front and revitalizing our downtown core will be key to economic and social unity of our city and its economic future. The success of one will enhance the success of the other.

Regarding our bay front, we have made important changes in policy in the last year and a half. We have reached out and involved our community, and embraced comprehensive planning for the entire bay front. We realize that only by working together can we successfully build a bay front which is appropriate from an environmental perspective, viable from a business and economic standpoint, and which will provide access for our citizens to their bay.

Placing the most intense land uses on the least sensitive lands, while preserving our most sensitive lands for the least intrusive uses is NOT capitulation to special interests, it is good public policy and the right thing to do.

We just recently took a significant and historic step toward making our bay front dreams a reality, along with the Board of Port Commissioners we jointly approved land use concepts for planning, environmental and financial study covering the entire bay front. This cooperation is unprecedented and I want to thank the Port District and in particular our Port Commissioner, Mr. Bill Hall. The land use concepts we are moving forward examine the planning of bay front property larger than both the north and south embarcadero in San Diego combined. This plan would add more park and recreational open space on Chula Vista's bay front alone, than exists in the entire Port of San Diego.

In order to bring vibrancy and new investment to our established downtown core, we must have a plan in place and a business and community friendly process. In the coming weeks our City Council will move forward in defining a private-non profit development corporation to bring regional

private sector redevelopment expertise to supplement our Redevelopment Agency and its staff. This process will not be easy and without controversy. But we must and we will breathe new life into our downtown core, so our residents can enjoy long needed improvements to this area and no longer spend all of their disposable income for dining, arts and entertainment in other communities outside of their own. Councilman John McCann has been my constant support as a member of our sub-committee dealing with redevelopment issues, working many hours in order to arrive at a system which can help us achieve our goals. Thank You for your leadership, John. Lets show John our appreciation for his efforts.

The achievement of bringing an institution of higher learning to Chula Vista has long been our dream. Your council has recently brought some of the finest experts in this area from around the region and the state, to examine the many possibilities. With the leadership of Deputy Mayor Mary Salas and Councilman Jerry Rindone, they have worked with our consultants and interested institutions both public and private. In the near future we will see a real concept plan for a University and a work program to bring it here. The interest and desire is already here, and when we make it happen it will

be due in no small part to their dedication and leadership. Thank You Mary and Jerry. Lets show them our appreciation.

Our region has been engaged in comprehensive planning efforts to examine transportation and land use, and a key stakeholders group has been led by Councilwoman Patty Davis. Her pragmatic, bottom line style and energy have earned her respect around our region, where she also works as a member of the Local Agency Formation Commission, examining issues of improving and changing government structures so they better serve their constituents. As we look at major decisions in the coming months our region must make such as the extension of the TRANSNET half-cent sales tax, Patty Davis will provide leadership and an important voice. Thank You for your leadership, Patty. Lets show Patty our appreciation.

We must continue to make a comprehensive review of our growth management standards, a process we started this year. While a healthy rate of physical and economic growth is always good, so too is the need to maintain stable rates of growth. A city, which completes master planned communities in half their planned time or less, without fully diversifying its local economy, establishing other sources of revenue from industrial,

commercial sources is asking for trouble. We must never allow ourselves to be put in a position where our demand for services outstrips our ability to provide for them, or we place in jeopardy the long-term financial health of our city.

Finally, our Council will consider a significant step in the coming weeks. Over many months we have invested heavily in studying and learning from some of the finest energy industry experts in North America, as to how best to achieve a degree of energy independence. Currently our city has the opportunity to consider and implement energy utility options which may benefit our citizens. I strongly believe this investment to be an appropriate one. Some believe even studying these options is “irresponsible” and apparently think some of the identified potential benefits are unworthy. Let's go over just a few of them now:

According to multiple industry experts, who have checked and re-checked a study on options for Chula Vista, there exists the potential to save Chula Vista millions in energy costs in coming years, better stabilize rates, better protect us from the fluctuations - and - as we have learned the hard way, manipulations of energy prices, have the ability to purchase interests in

power generation capacity, control funds paid by YOU which are by law to go back into our community, rather than have the power companies control them, explore incentives for and use of renewable energy sources and potentially offer cheaper energy costs to businesses considering bringing jobs to Chula Vista.

Now in the coming weeks and months, you may be bombarded with the message that your council is acting irresponsibly by exploring these options I have described to you. But common sense tells me, that if just one of these possibilities I have described can actually be achieved for our citizens and ratepayers, well that sounds like a pretty responsible investment to me.

My colleagues and I can assure you all, we do not take these issues lightly. We will not be intimidated, nor will we back away from the opportunity to do what is in our city's best interests.

All of these critical challenges present issues and problems that will not always be easy to solve. But these critical challenges present those special opportunities that tell us this is that special moment we must seize, lest it be missed.

Futures are built my friends, not inherited, and critical moments can only be seized when recognized. I said eighteen months ago upon taking office, we should see the bright promise of our city's future that lies on the horizon. I said also we should be determined our community ship sail a wise course to it. The winds my friends are at our back and fill our sails. It is indeed that critical time, **it's our time**, we must embrace it!

With love for this community and faith in it and each other, we will. It's Our Time.

Thank You, God Bless You and this fine city, and goodnight.